

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



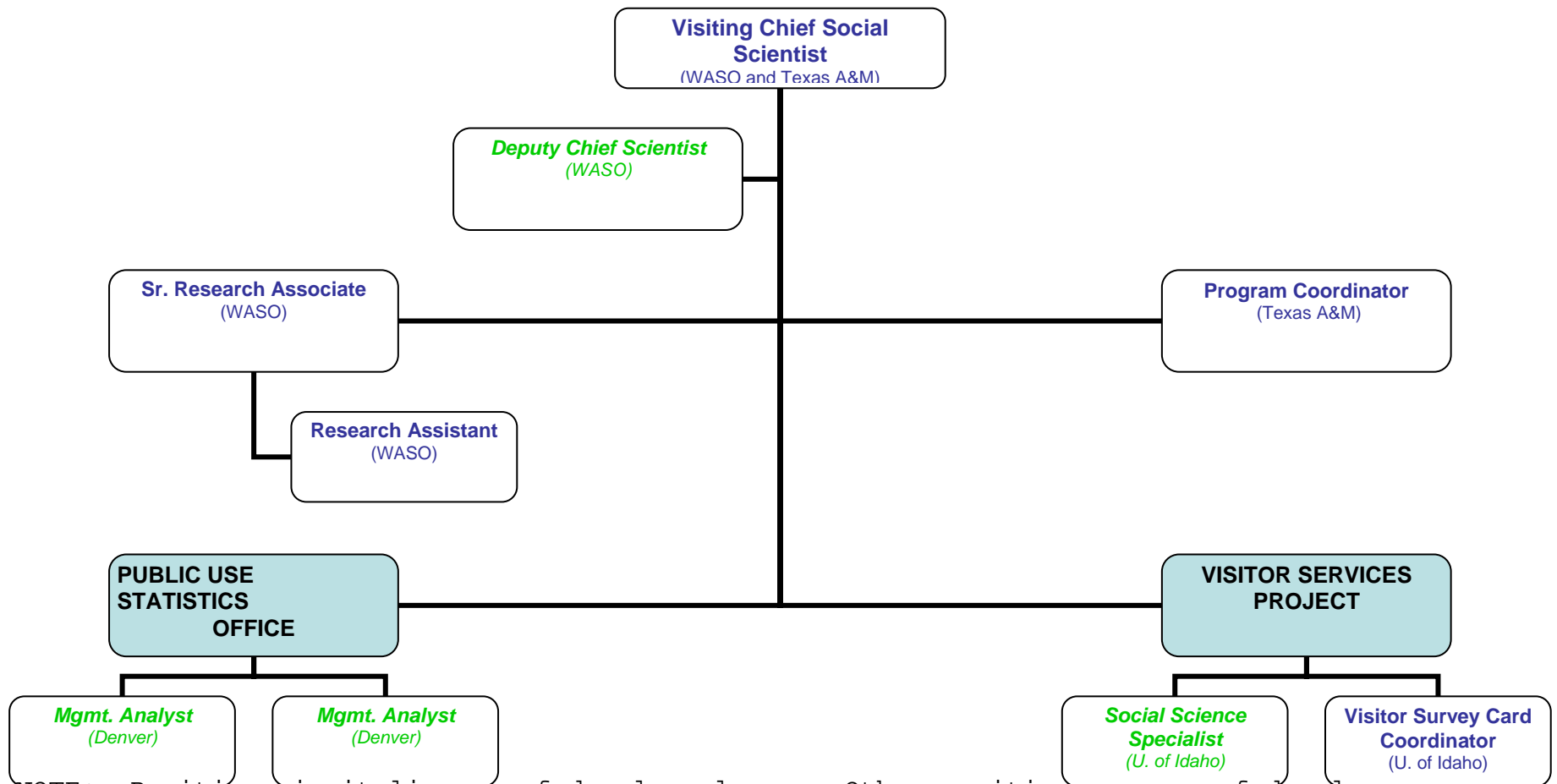
FY 2005 ANNUAL REPORT



National Park Service Social Science Program

September 2006

NPS Social Science Program Staffing



NOTE: Positions in italics are federal employees. Other positions are non-federal.
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National Park Service Social Science Program FY 2005 Annual Report

Task Order J5040 02 0018, Cooperative Agreement H50000 02 0271
Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) Social Science Program is located in the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science directorate. A Visiting Chief Social Scientist (VCSS), who serves a three-year renewable term and is co-located in Washington, D.C. and at Texas A&M University, heads the Program. The VCSS is a faculty member at Texas A&M University working in partnership with the NPS.

The overall objectives of the Social Science Program are to conduct and promote state-of-the-art social science related to the mission of the National Park Service and to deliver usable knowledge to NPS managers and the public. Specific functions of the Office of the VCSS are to:

- X Provide supervision and guidance to the Visitor Services Project, Public Use Statistics Office, and other activities of the NPS Social Science Program;
- X Manage the approval process for submitting NPS information-collection requests to the Office of Management and Budget;
- X Sponsor and provide direction to social science research related to the national needs of the NPS;
- X Serve as liaison with other science and related programs of the NPS;
- X Serve as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division, the Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies on social science activities; and
- X Advise the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director, the National Leadership Council, and the NPS Advisory Board as requested.

This report summarizes major accomplishments of the NPS Social Science Program in FY 2005.

Provide Supervision and Guidance to Activities of the NPS Social Science Program

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/index.cfm>

Washington Office

The Washington office of the Social Science Program has responsibility for budgeting and for overseeing national program activities that originate in Washington. It also coordinates many social science activities within the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science directorate and other parts of the National Park Service.

A full-time senior research associate staffs the Washington office. A research assistant (usually a graduate student) is employed each semester in the office. In addition, the Deputy Chief Scientist of the Natural Resource Stewardship and Science directorate coordinates many inherently federal functions of the Social Science Program, such as contracting and oversight of the three federal employees working in the program.

Important activities of the Washington office in FY 2005 included the following:

- Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan. With the Texas A&M University office, the Washington office planned and conducted nine stakeholder workshops to solicit public input into a new Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan. Workshops were conducted in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kotzebue, and Juneau, Alaska and in Washington, D.C during FY 2005. A draft literature and policy review of social science research and activities in Alaska was published in 2005 as part of this process, and a final plan will be published in 2007.



Figure 1. Stakeholder workshop, Kotzebue, Alaska

- Social Science Studies Collection. The Social Science Studies Collection, an online digital library of social science research in the National Park System, grew to 269 entries under the direction of the Washington office. This archive, part of the NPS Focus library, houses the largest collection of national park social science studies in the

U.S. Currently, NPS Focus is available on the NPS Intranet, but plans are in place to make the library publicly accessible.

- Social Science Intern Program. Each semester the Social Science Program employs an intern in its Washington office. Interns assist on a variety of daily and special projects. They may also have opportunities to work in parks during visitor surveys. For information on intern application procedures see:
<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/pdf/Internships-2006.pdf>

Texas A&M University Office

A half-time administrative assistant staffs the Texas A&M University (TAMU) office of the NPS Social Science Program. The primary responsibility of this position is to oversee the budgetary aspects of the cooperative agreement with TAMU supporting the Social Science Program and to edit and print reports generated by its various activities. The TAMU office also manages travel, coordinates peer reviews of publications, and assists with other tasks as needed.

- Peer Reviews. The TAMU office coordinated peer reviews, revisions, and publication of the *Social Science Research Review* monograph titled, "The Economic Significance of Recreation on National Parks and Other Public Lands. The monograph is authored by Dr. Daniel Stynes of Michigan State University.
- Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan. The TAMU office worked with the University of Washington Protected Area Studies Unit to produce a draft literature and policy review of social science research and activities in Alaska.

Visitor Services Project <http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm>

The Visitor Services Project (VSP) conducts 11-12 in-depth visitor surveys in National Park System units each year. Park nominations are prioritized by the Regional Offices and submitted to the VSP Advisory Committee. The Associate Director of Natural Resource Stewardship and Science approves the Advisory Committee's recommendations. Headquartered at the University of Idaho Park Studies Unit, the activities of the VSP are overseen by a principal investigator, who is a faculty member in the College of Natural Resources at the University. The VCSS and the Advisory Committee provide additional oversight.

Since FY 2002, 20 percent of Fee Demonstration money has been available to the VSP to contribute up to two-thirds of the cost of surveys for small parks (annual budgets of less than \$1.5 million). Twenty-six small parks have taken advantage of this assistance to conduct visitor studies, including four parks in 2005.

- 2005 VSP Surveys. In 2005, VSP surveys were conducted at 11 units: Congaree National Park, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Chickasaw National Recreation Area, Timpanogos Cave National Monument, Yosemite National Park, Fort Sumter National Monument, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Nicodemus National Historic Site, and Johnstown Flood National Memorial (Table 1).

Table 1. Parks, survey dates, sample sizes, and response rates for the 2005 Visitor Services Project.

Park/Supervisor/Affiliation	Dates	Sample Size/Response Rates
Congaree National Park* Supv: M. Littlejohn/NPS VSP	April 15-24 (10-day)	Sample: 453 Response: 72%
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Supv: B. Barrie./no affiliation	May 24-30 (7-day)	Sample: 850 Response: 58%
Lincoln Home National Historic Site Supv: M. Littlejohn/NPS VSP	May 27-June 5 (10-day)	Sample: 650 Response: 71%
Chickasaw National Recreation Area Supv: B. Forist/SSP	July 1-10 (10-day)	Sample: 883 Response: 54%
Timpanogos Cave National Monument* Supv: L. Le/VSP	July 8-16 (9-day)	Sample: 460 Response: 62%
Yosemite National Park Supv: M. Littlejohn/NPS VSP and J. Gramann./Texas A&M University	July 8-17 (10-day)	Sample: 1,204 Response: 65%
Fort Sumter National Monument Supv: M. Schuett./Texas A&M University	July 17-23 (7-day)	Sample: 594 Response: 64%
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Supv: M. Morgan/University of Missouri, Columbia	July 22-31 (10-day)	Sample: 605 Response: 61%
Cuyahoga Valley National Park Supv: M. Littlejohn/NPS VSP	July 23-31 (9-day)	Sample: 1,188 Response: 76%
Nicodemus National Historic Site* Supv: G. Vander Stoep/Michigan State University	July 23-Sept. 13 (53-day)	Sample: 302 Response: 69%
Johnstown Flood National Memorial* Supv: L. Le/VSP	July 30-August 9 (11-day)	Sample: 310 Response: 75%

*=small park

- Beginning in 2005, the VSP started conducting studies for "very small parks." Very small parks are defined as units that receive less than 300 visitor groups during a 7 to 10 day period. For the very small parks, the survey period is extended, beyond the normal 7 to 10-day period, until 300 questionnaires have been distributed. In 2005, one very small park, Nicodemus National Historic Site, had a visitor study done.
- In 2005, an on-line option was included in the VSP study done at one park-- Timpanogos Cave National Monument. Survey questionnaires were distributed to 460 visitor groups, each of which contained a card with a website and a password to allow the visitor to do the survey online. Of the 286 questionnaires returned (62% response rate), 45 were completed online (16% of the total returned). Further evaluation of this option was scheduled for FY 2006.
- Faculty Involvement Program. In 2005, the VSP continued its successful practice of using university faculty members to supervise VSP surveys during summer months. Most parks request that their visitor surveys be conducted during the summer season. Because the permanent VSP staff is not large enough to oversee all of these surveys, the employment of university faculty as supervisors is critical to the success of the program. Faculty members and staff from Texas A&M University, the University of Idaho, Michigan State University, and the University of Missouri, as well as one Ph.D. without affiliation, participated in the faculty involvement program in 2005.
- VSP Publications. Reports were completed and closeout sessions held for the 11 units participating in the VSP Surveys in FY 2004. Copies of VSP reports can be downloaded at: <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.reports.htm>



Figure 2. 2005 VSP survey, SSP student intern interviewing at Lincoln Home National Historic Site,

Serving the Visitor 2004, a report summarizing the results of VSP and VSC surveys (see below), was published in FY 2005. *Serving the Visitor 2004* can be downloaded at: <http://www1.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/docs/STV04.pdf>.

Visitor Survey Card <http://psu.uidaho.edu/vsc.htm>

The Visitor Survey Card (VSC) is a component of the Visitor Services Project. The VSC is a mail-back customer evaluation card containing questions designed to measure a park's performance with respect to NPS goals IIa1 (visitor satisfaction) and IIb1 (visitor understanding and appreciation) under the Government Performance and Results Act.

- 2005 VSC Surveys. In 2005, visitors to 305 parks returned 28,947 VSC surveys. Ninety-six percent of respondents rated the overall quality of facilities, services, and recreational opportunities in the National Park System as either good or very good. The Systemwide response rate to the VSC, which uses no follow-ups, was 26%.

Public Use Statistics Office <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/>

Located in Denver, CO, the Public Use Statistics Office (PUSO) coordinates visitation counting in all units of the National Park System that report visits. The PUSO also provides short-term forecasts of visitation for the NPS Budget Office, consults with individual parks on changes in counting methods, writes and distributes a monthly executive summary of public use, and publishes the annual *National Park Service Statistical Abstract*. In addition, the PUSO responds on an almost daily basis to numerous requests for customized reports of NPS visitation. These requests come from planners, engineers, private corporations, the media, researchers, and various offices and programs of the NPS and the Department of the Interior.

- Park Audits. In FY 2005, 52 parks were reviewed or audited for proper counting instructions and procedures, resulting in numerous changes and updates. Almost all audits were conducted by e-mail or telephone. The following parks received significant audits or reviews: Charles Pinckney National Historic Site, Grand Canyon National Park, Grand Teton National Park, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, Saint Croix National Scenic River, Big Cypress National Preserve, and Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve.
- Traffic Counter Replacement Program. Over 75 traffic counters were distributed by PUSO to 50 parks during FY 2005. This replacement program is vital to improving the accuracy of NPS visitation statistics.

- Visitation Legacy Files. The purpose of the Legacy Files maintained by PUSO is to assist analysts in identifying conditions that affect monthly or annual visitation to parks. Examples include road closures, special events, and natural disasters. In FY 2005, 475 separate entries were made in the Visitation Legacy Files.
- Publications. PUSO produced 12 monthly executive summaries of public use that are distributed to regional directors and key directorates. Tom Wade, PUSO management analyst, is responsible for writing and distributing the monthly public use summaries.

The Public Use Statistics Office published the *2004 National Park Service Statistical Abstract*. This authoritative record of visitation to units of the National Park System is authored by Butch Street, PUSO management analyst. The abstract also contains two-year visitation forecasts and a breakdown of National Park System acreage. A copy of the abstract is available to download at: <http://www2.nature.nps.gov/stats/abst2005.pdf>



Figure 3. NPS vehicle traffic counter at Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas.

Money Generation Model (Version 2)<http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mgm2/>

The Money Generation Model (MGM2) is the tool used by the NPS to estimate the economic contribution of visitor expenditures to local regions around parks. It is managed through a cooperative agreement with Michigan State University.

- MGM2 Update and Expansion. In FY 2005, economic impact estimates were updated based on 2004 visitation data. In addition, the model was expanded to include the impacts of park operations. Final estimates, based on the update and expansion, are included in the FY 2004 Economic Impact Report published in FY 2005.
- Park-Specific Reports. Parks participating in VSP visitor surveys may include a module of expenditure questions in their questionnaire. Data from these surveys is used to produce park-specific estimates of the economic contribution of visitor spending to local regions. In FY 2005, reports were published for all 11 parks that conducted VSP surveys.

Social Science Research Review

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/products.cfm#SSRR>

The *Social Science Research Review* is a peer-reviewed serial publication of the Social Science Program. The purpose of each review is to provide the basis for scientific understanding of a social science issue critical to the NPS. Experts are commissioned to write the papers, and each monograph is peer-reviewed. In 2005, Dr. Stynes authored the seventh article in the Social Science Research Review Series, entitled *Economic Significance of Recreational Uses of National Parks and Other Public Lands*.

Sabbatical in the Parks Clearinghouse

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/sabbaticals/index.cfm>

The Social Science Program serves as a clearinghouse for university faculty members seeking sabbatical experiences in the National Park System. The Sabbatical in the Parks program is managed by the Social Science Program's Washington office. The clearinghouse matches parks having specific research or technical assistance needs in the social and natural sciences with faculty members possessing the desired expertise. The Sabbatical in the Parks Clearinghouse is one of the principal ways in which the NPS makes parks available for science and applies science to the management needs of parks. No faculty were engaged in this program for FY 2005.

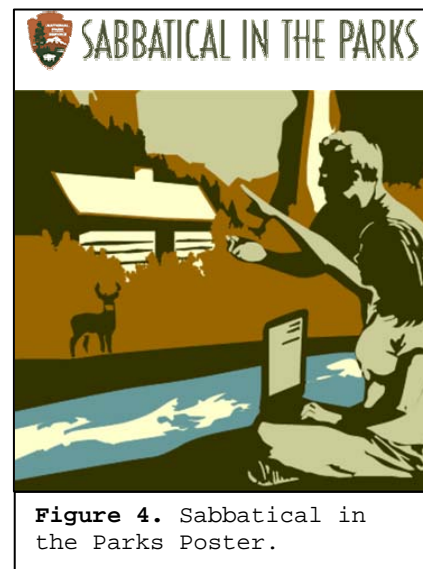


Figure 4. Sabbatical in the Parks Poster.

Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/canonscholarships/>

The Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program is managed by the NPS Visiting Senior Scientist, and is a component of the Social Science Program budget. The program is a partnership between Canon U.S.A., Inc., the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and the NPS. It awards eight \$78,000 scholarships annually to doctoral students who conduct dissertation research critical to the needs of national parks. Research in the biological, social, and cultural sciences are eligible. Scholarship funding comes from Canon U.S.A., Inc., with four awards going to students studying at universities in the United States and four going to students studying at universities throughout the Americas, but not in the U.S.

- FY 2005 Awards. In FY 2004, eight 2004 Canon Scholars were announced and funds transferred to the students' universities by the AAAS.

Manage the Approval Process for OMB Submissions

<http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/survey.cfm>

In consultation with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Department of the Interior (DOI), the NPS uses an expedited approval process for NPS-sponsored surveys of the public that streamlines the standard Paperwork Reduction Act approval process for NPS-sponsored surveys.

In FY 2005, 51 surveys, focus groups, or field experiments were approved under the expedited review process. Approved studies were conducted in or for 48 units of the National Park System. On average, it took 43 calendar days from initial submission to the Social Science Program for an information collection project to be reviewed and approved by OMB. Nine additional studies were either withdrawn by the principal investigators or deferred to a later year. OMB denied approval for one proposal.

Three additional applications (including a renewal of the expedited review program) were submitted under the standard Information Collection Review process, which requires more opportunity for public comment on the collection before it can be conducted.

Serve as Liaison with Other Science and Related Programs of the NPS

Park Planning and Special Studies. The Social Science Program participated in a carrying capacity working group to develop recommendations for improving the consideration of park visitor capacities and visitor-caused impacts on park resources during the General Management Planning process. Specifically, the Social Science Program took the lead in organizing and convening a workshop in March 2005 to identify and prioritize social variables that all parks should routinely collect for use in visitor capacity and other planning.

Fee Program. The Social Science Program cooperated with the NPS Fee Program and with Shenandoah National Park in a pilot test of a Visitor Information System. From March through December 2004, fee collectors at Shenandoah collected zip codes and person-per-

vehicle counts from groups entering the park. In FY 2005, final reports were produced based on this pilot test.

Conferences, Meetings, and Other Involvement. Social Science Program staff made presentations and participated in panels at the following conferences and meetings during FY 2005: NPS Interpretive Leadership Seminar, The George Wright Society Conference, and the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. In addition, the Social Science Program responded to several inquiries from the media regarding trends in visitation to National Park System units. The program also participated as an active member of the Education Evaluation Coordination Team, a subcommittee of the National Education Council.

Serve as Liaison with the USGS, the Department of the Interior, and Other Federal Agencies

Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute. The Visiting Chief Social Scientist participated in the 2004 review of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute in Missoula, MT. The Leopold Institute is an interagency center conducting social and natural science research on wilderness issues. Outcomes of this involvement included the Social Science Program and the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute co-chairing a session, Applications of Social Science Research to Park Management, at the 2005 George Wright Society meeting and an ongoing dialogue on research regarding age trends in recreational use of wilderness and other public lands. The Leopold Institute also supplied significant input into the Alaska Region Social Science Research Plan.

Parks Canada. The Social Science Program engaged in discussions with Parks Canada on improved methods for counting visitors.

Advise the Secretary, Director, National Leadership Council, and the NPS Advisory Board

The Social Science Program regularly receives requests for information and analysis from the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, the NPS Director's Office, and other administrative programs of the NPS and the Department of the Interior. In FY 2005, many of these requests dealt with summarizing and interpreting data from the Money Generation Model describing the economic impact of national parks on surrounding regions. For example, the Social Science Program produced a series of

spreadsheets illustrating the economic impacts of parks for the NPS Director to use in presentations to various groups.

In FY 2005, the Social Science Program worked extensively with the Health and Recreation Committee of the NPS Advisory Board to design a rigorous evaluation strategy for seven pilot projects that are testing ways to encourage greater physical activity by park visitors. This project represents the NPS response to the President's Healthier U.S. Initiative. The first two projects, at Sitka NHP and Cuyahoga Valley NP, will be implemented in FY 2006. The remaining five pilots will be implemented in FY 2007.

About the NPS Social Science Program

The role and functions of the NPS Social Science Program are to: provide leadership and direction to the social science activities of the NPS, coordinate social science activities with other programs of the NPS, act as liaison with the USGS Biological Resources Division and other federal agencies on social science activities, provide technical support to parks, park clusters, support offices, and regional offices, and support a program of applied social science research related to national research needs of the NPS.

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